



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

**July 26, 2020**

**Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

I like to watch the program called, Antiques Roadshow on the BBC channel. I love watching people's faces when they discover that some object they have had for years is worth thousands of dollars. Recently a man was on the show who had been digging in his yard. He found a ring which turned out to be a medieval ring with a ruby stone in the centre that was worth about \$20,000 dollars. Sometimes people are lucky enough to come upon something of great value, a true treasure, purely by accident. I was reminded of that by the first parable in today's gospel reading. The scene is that of a poor laborer working in someone's field; out of the blue he hits upon this great treasure and, being the shrewd man that he was, he scrapes together whatever few monies he can afford and buys the field from the owner he was working for.

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is a bit like that. In other words, we can stumble upon the kingdom of God without having had any intention of searching for it in the first place. Jesus seems to be saying that God can touch our lives out of the blue, without our having done anything much to make it happen. The Lord can come to us even in our sinfulness when we are not looking for him. There are examples in the gospel of Jesus taking an initiative towards people who had made no effort to make contact with him. He sees these people and goes towards them, as with meeting the "Woman at the Well", even though she had not sought out him.

As a result, such people discover the treasures of God almost by accident. That can be the way for many us in life today as well. We might find ourselves at some event that relates to the message of the gospel today, at a prayer meeting, the Eucharist celebration, Food Pantry outreach to those in need. We can suddenly find ourselves touched in some way that surprises us, perhaps touched on a spiritual level in our being that is new to us. We become moved in some way. Leaving us with a strong desire to explore what God has allowed us to have stumbled upon; our intention was set on a personal journey which gradually opens up for us a renewed love for God and neighbor in new ways that change our lives.

Jesus is saying in that first parable that God can come to us even when we are not looking for him. We can be surprisingly graced as we go about our daily business. When that happens, when God unexpectedly touches our lives, the first parable encourages us to take decisive action. We need to seize the moment, to respond with all we have, because it is a moment of profound grace in our life. Like the person in the parable going about daily work, it is in the ordinary circumstances of our lives that we often stumble upon the treasures of the kingdom, the treasure of God's purpose for our lives and his continued presence through the Holy Spirit.

The person at the centre of the second parable is not a poor blue collar worker, but a rich merchant. They did not stumble upon the pearl of great value. They had spent their life accumulating things and searching for the finest of pearls. One day, after years of searching, finding a pearl which was more beautiful than any other pearls they possessed. They gladly sell all the others owned to purchase the most valuable.

Jesus says that the kingdom of God is also like the rich merchant. If the first parable suggests God's searching for us, the second parable highlights the significance of our own search for our relationship with God. At some level on our Christian journey we are all searchers. We constantly look for genuine love and friendship; we search for truth and justice, for meaning and purpose in our lives. The third parable encourages us to keep faithful to that task of seeking, especially seeking the Lord, the ultimate source of all that is good. We seek the Lord with the blessings of grace, and when we find Him, we choose what is good and throw sin away, so as not to lose the most valuable of all treasures, eternal Salvation.